

How big of a sinner are you?

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The Apostle Paul made the surprising statement in one of our readings this past Sunday that he was the worst of sinners; surprising, because if you know anything about Paul you would probably describe him as maybe the most faithful, hardworking Christian that ever lived.

Of course, Paul realized that no matter how hard he tried to fight against it, there was still sin in his life.

Just like the rest of us he had his bad moments when he gave into temptation and said or did or thought things that he knew were not pleasing to the Lord. And as he thought about all of the grace that God had bestowed upon him and how little he deserved it, he could rightly conclude that he was a sinner who deserved God's punishment rather than his mercy.

It was not false humility which led him to say what he did, he really believed that he was the worst of sinners, in desperate need of the promise of forgiveness that comes only through faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior.

□ I heard it suggested here recently that when we get to heaven there might be an arm-wrestling match between Paul and many other Christians who sincerely believe that they should claim the title for themselves. And for the same reason.

The more we understand the love and grace of God in our own lives, the more we realize how totally undeserving we are of his mercy.

If you're only "a little sinner," you're probably not troubled so much by the things you have done wrong; but the closer you get to the light of God's perfect love, the more you see how stained and imperfect our own lives are. But that's a good thing.

With this awareness comes the understanding that our Savior's love and mercy are all sufficient, and the more you can rejoice in the promise that "though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow."

□ In the middle of our wrestling match, Jesus would no doubt step in and say: "You're both wrong, I am the biggest sinner!" How can that be? Well in truth, Jesus took the sins of this whole world upon himself and then suffered the punishment that those sins deserved upon the cross. He became the world's biggest sinner, in order that we might become the holy, redeemed children of God.